

PET-CAM

by

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FADE IN:

INT. HOUSE - CAT'S PET-CAM POV - NIGHT

Night vision in a creepy monochrome black and white.

The view from down low. Cat level.

Moving towards a doorway. Rubbing against the wood frame as it passes with a slight PURR. Continuing down a long dark --

HALLWAY

-- crammed with moving boxes.

A SPIDER skitters across the path. The cat doesn't slow. It simply moves along to the --

KITCHEN

-- Where it heads straight towards a pet door, pushes right through the plastic flap to the --

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

The sounds of nocturnal wildlife. Crickets. Mosquitoes. The occasional owl.

The cat moves along a path past bushes and flowers.

A RUSTLE in the bushes makes the cat whip the camera view towards the sound. It waits. Nothing happens.

It continues down to the --

STREET

MEAN BOY (O.S.)
Hello, kitty.

Dead stop. Cam snaps to the left.

A MEAN BOY, 15, stands on the sidewalk. Blocks the way. An evil snarl on his face.

MEAN BOY
Where you going, kitty?

SWISH.

A switchblade appears in the boy's hand.

MEAN BOY
Come here, kitty. Meow. Meow.

He squats down. Pretends to be harmless.

MEAN BOY
Meow. Come here. Let me pet you.

The cat moves closer. A soft purr.

MEAN BOY
There you go, come here.

He reaches out with his hand as if to pet the cat.

The cat gets closer.

With the speed of a rattler, the boy grabs a hold of the cat.

The cat SCREECHES. SCREAMS. HISSES.

A quick flash of the knife's blade followed by blurry images.

Sounds of a violent fight, then the boy screams.

MEAN BOY
Ahhhh! Fucking cat!

The cat leaps to the ground, makes a run down the street.
Under parked cars. In under a bush where it stops. It turns
to look behind.

The boy did not pursue. He inspects a nasty bite on his arm.

MEAN BOY
Fucking thing. Next time, I'll cut
you to shreds.

The cat continues into the safety of the bushes. Pushes
through dense underbrush. Crosses a street. Under a fence
into a --

CEMETERY

A well-kept graveyard. Grass mowed. Flowers by headstones and
markers.

The cat moves through the quiet place.

CRUNCH!

The cat stops.

CRUNCH!

Turns its head toward the sound.

A few graves away, a shovel throws dirt onto a pile. Someone digs inside a new grave.

The cat moves closer. Stops at a safe distance. Watches.

A MAN STRAINS inside the hole.

Sounds of WOOD and METAL, followed by CREAKING.

The man breathes out excitedly, like someone who just found a treasure.

What the hell is he doing?

The cat, not interested, continues into the night...

END PET-CAM POV

FADE OUT:

PET-CAM

FADE IN:

INT. HOUSE - FOYER - DAY

An old house in need of a remodel. Dark wood. Hideous wallpaper. Heavy curtains that block out light.

An ominous, steep narrow staircase to the second floor dominates the foyer.

The front door swings open. Dust particles swirl in a shaft of light that now fills the space.

JOAN, 29, unpretentiously attractive, self-assured, no-nonsense, carries a big pet carrier inside.

Behind her, RON, 33, a kind teacher with long-ish wavy hair and a pleasant personality in comfortable everyday clothes. He's got a heavy cardboard box in his arms.

They look around the gloomy space. Ron's doubtful. Joan sees potential.

JOAN
Well, here we are.

RON
A bit morose. Don't you think?

JOAN
Haunted houses are not supposed to be cheerful, Ron.

She puts the carrier down by the staircase, then yanks the curtains open, letting in more light.

RON
Maybe we could have at least one room designed in Scandinavian minimalist style? I'm thinking white and birch wood aesthetics.

JOAN
Asylum chic?

They give each other a playful glare.

RON
Nothing wrong with light and airy.

JOAN
I want our guests to get goosebumps when they step inside. Not experience nirvana.

Ron's about to counter, when his cell phone chimes.

RON
It's the moving company.

He steps back outside. Joan gazes up the looming staircase before taking the steps two at the time.

SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY

Long and dark. Two doors to on each side.

Joan reaches the second floor. She moves with a purpose, enters the first room to the right.

MASTER BEDROOM

Joan heads straight for the window, pulls open the curtains.

She looks around the dismal boudoir. Old wallpaper with dirty outlines of furniture that once occupied the place.

Joan cringes at the sight.

SERIES OF SHOTS

-- Joan opens curtains and windows in another room.

-- Flushes a rust-stained toilet.

-- Wipes a mirror full of grime with her hand.

-- Picks up a rust/blood-stained rag from the hallway floor. Serious cringe. What the hell...

END SERIES OF SHOTS**FIRST FLOOR - HALLWAY - DAY**

Joan descends the stairs from the second floor with that rag held between two fingers.

Ellie, the orange cat, meows at the sight of her.

Joan drops the stained rag into an empty plastic bag, then opens up the flap to the carrier.

JOAN

C'mon. Go check out your new home.

Ellie leaps out, trots down the hallway, then stops at a door near the end. She sniffs the door with great interest.

Curious, Joan follows. She opens the door. Pitch black inside. She feels around for the light switch. Flips it on and off, but the bulb is dead.

Ellie slinks past her into the dark.

JOAN

Ellie, you furball! Get Back here!
(sighs)
Stupid cat...

The front door opens, disappointed, Ron enters.

RON
The movers won't be here until
tomorrow.

Joan slumps her shoulders, walks towards him.

JOAN
You're kidding?

RON
No. The driver had a heart attack.

JOAN
Oh geez, will he be okay?

RON
They wouldn't say. I'm hoping our
belongings will be safe. They left
them at a truck stop.

Joan groans.

JOAN
I was looking forward to the first
night in our own bed.

He slips his arm around her waist, pulls her in.

RON
I'll go buy an air mattress. It
will be fun, just like camping.

Joan giggles. They kiss.

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Joan puts groceries into the brand-new fridge.

There's a light knock on the kitchen door. Joan turns around.

It's RUTH, the realtor, 60s, with a name tag pinned to her
shirt. She holds a big bouquet of flowers in a vase.

RUTH
Just me, Ruthie.

JOAN
Oh, hi, Ruth. C'mon in.

RUTH
The front door was open, so --

JOAN
Yeah, no problem.

RUTH
I just wanted to see how you guys
were settling into your new home.

She hands Joan the flowers.

JOAN
Wow! Thank you. They're beautiful.

Joan puts the flowers on the counter.

JOAN
The moving company won't be here
until tomorrow, and there are no
light fixtures anywhere, but other
than that, we're doing great.

RUTH
Yeah, I imagine this house had some
valuable hardware in it, and when
houses sit empty for years, some
people feel it's okay to pilfer.

Curious, Ruth glances around. With an apologetic smile, she
clasps her hands.

RUTH
To be honest, I was a little
apprehensive selling you this
house.

JOAN
No no. Don't worry. We don't
believe in ghosts and are not
superstitious. It's all good.

Joan smiles, puts her at ease, then gestures at the house.

JOAN
We love this house. It's perfect
for our needs.

Relieved Ruth smiles wide.

RUTH
I guess it is the perfect place for
a horror writer.

JOAN
I'm counting on it. My publisher is
after me about my next one.

Ruth looks at her watch.

RUTH
I better be off. I have another
property to show down the street.

An Addams Family ringtone plays. Joan grabs her phone.

RUTH
I'll leave you to it.

Ruth winks, then leaves. Joan checks the phone's screen. It's a video call. She answers with excitement.

JOAN
Ashley!

ASHLEY, 29, energetic and bubbly with a big stylish afro, is on the phone's screen. She squeals with delight.

ASHLEY
Oh my God! Oh my God! You're in the
new house.

JOAN
Yep. Got the keys yesterday and
drove down this morning.

Ashley clutches her non-existent pearls, takes on an over-the-top serious tone.

ASHLEY
And...
(whispers)
Have you seen any signs of the...
you know who, yet?

Joan chuckles, rolls her eyes.

JOAN
No spooky friend requests yet.

Ashley's turn to laugh, then back to being bubbly.

ASHLEY
I want a tour. Take me around. Show
me the house.

Joan, fake sighs. She switches to the rear camera, sweeps the room with the phone while she watches Ashley on the screen.

JOAN
This is the kitchen.

ASHLEY
Boooring. But, you can probably do something with it.

Joan walks out into the --

FOYER

-- aims the camera down the dark first floor hallway.

ASHLEY
I like that. Nice and creepy.

Joan turns the camera towards the staircase.

ASHLEY
Ooooh. I love it. I'm getting all tingly. Take me upstairs, baby.

JOAN
You sicko.

Joan ascends the stairs to the --

SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY

She moves the camera around to show the place.

ASHLEY
Oh wow. I can totally see the ghost of Missus Bolen floating down that hallway.

JOAN
Maybe she'll dusts while she's at it.

Joan walks down the hallway to the last room on the left. The door is closed.

Ashley's eyes grow wide.

ASHLEY
Is that where it... happened?

Joan opens the door. It CREAKS on rusty hinges.

MURDER ROOM

Thick heavy drapes keep the daylight at bay. Joan pads in, pulls the drapes apart.

An empty room with walls covered with whimsical wallpaper spattered with old dried blood...

Ashley's jaw drops. Even Joan appears uncomfortable.

ASHLEY

What the fuck! They didn't even clean it up?

JOAN

I know. Definitely have to do a complete do over in here.

Ashley thinks hard, gestures, "wait, hold on".

ASHLEY

No. Don't change a thing. It's perfect. This kind of authenticity will make people flock to your BnB.

Joan cringes. Behind her --

-- unseen to them, a dark shape stands in the hallway.

JOAN

Real people died here, Ash. Got to show some respect. I was thinking more like some sort of memorial.

She turns around to leave. The figure is gone.

Ashley gives her the theatrical eye roll.

ASHLEY

Freaks like us who find beauty in the macabre, they're not gonna come for tears or roses.

JOAN

It's about balance. Keeping the intrigue alive but not forgetting the human lives lost.

ASHLEY

You big softie.

Joan laughs, strolls out into the --

SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY

-- and shuts the door.

ASHLEY

Hey Joans, how 'bout I come down tomorrow and add a pinch of my darkness to help balance your sensible touch?

Joan mulls it over for half a second.

JOAN

Would I ever say no to the Mistress of Malevolence?

ASHLEY

Hey. You're not the only one that has a reputation to maintain.

They both laugh.

ASHLEY

See you tomorrow, Joans. Love you.

Ashley ends the call. Joan heads down the stairs.

INT. HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Light rain patters on the windows.

Joan and Ron lie close to each other on an air mattress on the floor. Two LED camping lanterns by each side light the room just right for romance.

JOAN

First night in our own house.

RON

(flirty)

Yeah... Let's make it one even the ghosts will remember.

They giggle and kiss until --

Joan jolts up into a sitting position.

JOAN

Ellie!

RON

What?

JOAN

She ran down into the basement and wouldn't come back.

Ron has other thoughts, tries to pull her back down. Joan grabs her lantern, gets out of bed.

JOAN

I can't sleep if I don't know where she is.

Ron sighs, grips his lantern, then follows her.

FIRST FLOOR HALLWAY

Joan and Ron head down the stairs to the basement door.

It's ajar.

RON

She probably left hours ago.

JOAN

But, I haven't seen her since. I feel terrible I forgot about her.

She opens the door. Shines her light down the steep stairway. It's dark down there. Spooky...

JOAN

Ellie?

She hesitates, takes a few steps down. Stops. Ron's amused.

RON

What? I thought you said you're not afraid of ghosts.

JOAN

I'm not.

Defiant, she stomps down the stairs.

JOAN

It's human nature to be cautious in the dark -- the only real monsters out there are humans. That's what we should be afraid of.

Before she reaches the bottom --

MEOW.

They both stop. Listen.

JOAN

Ellie! Ellie, where are you?

Another MEOW.

RON
She's up there.

They turn around, climb back up the stairs.

FIRST FLOOR HALLWAY

Joan closes the door behind them.

They shine their lights in both directions. No cat.

JOAN
Ellie?

Ron continues towards the staircase.

RON
She's around here somewhere. I'm
going back to bed.

JOAN
You go. I'll be right there.

Joan, still worried, heads into the --

KITCHEN

She takes out a food and water dish from the pet carrier,
puts them on the floor.

JOAN
Ellie. Got your yum-yums.

She shakes the food dish. The kibbles rattle. No cat. She
takes a quick glance around, then leaves.

MASTER BEDROOM

Joan walks in, slips into bed next to Ron who's now asleep.

KITCHEN

Ellie shows up in the doorway. She saunters up to her food
dish, takes a few bites.

MASTER BEDROOM - LATER

Thunder rumbles in the distance.

Joan and Ron asleep until --

CRASH

-- Joan awakes with a start. She sits up, listens. Some kind of noise from downstairs.

She grabs her lantern, looks at Ron who's sound asleep, then pads out of the room.

FIRST FLOOR HALLWAY

Joan walks down the stairs.

JOAN

Ellie? Is that you?

She smells something, crinkles her nose, peers down the hallway, but there's nothing there but darkness.

She continues into the --

KITCHEN

CRUNCH! AAAHHHH! Joan screams.

With an angry sigh, she stares down at her foot.

Blood drips onto the floor. A shard of glass pokes out from the bottom of her foot.

The bouquet of flowers lies in a big puddle of water on the floor. The vase broken. Pieces of glass scattered everywhere.

She flips on the lights over the stove, stares at her foot.

JOAN

Shit.

She limps to a cupboard, retrieves a first aid kit, removes the shard with a wince, then bandages it.

JOAN

Ellie? Where are you?

She gets a garbage bag, roll of paper towels, and cleans up.

FIRST FLOOR HALLWAY

Joan limps down the hallway, shines her light in search of the cat. She peeks into the rooms along the way.

JOAN

Ellie! Come here. Meow meow.

MEOW. The sound comes from upstairs.

Joan looks up, sighs, about to follow to the second floor when she notices the door to the basement. It's ajar.

With a frown, she limps over. Listens. She quietly opens the door a little more. CREAK.

Joan looks down the stairs. Leans forward, holds the light out to see further down.

A low rumble of thunder from outside, the only sound.

She grabs the basement door knob --

MASTER BEDROOM

-- Pushes the bedroom door shut.

Joan tip-toes over to the bed where Ron is sleeping. She climbs in next to him. She's soon asleep.

Pre-lap: KNOCK. KNOCK. KNOCK.

FOYER - DAY

Joan makes her way down the staircase with a heavy limp. Hair tussled. Eyes squinted. She ties a robe closed around her.

She opens the front door, peers out.

VIOLET, 75, stands outside. A quirky woman with inquisitive eyes and a smile that shows off her too perfect teeth. She holds out a plate of cookies.

Confused, Joan stares at the cookies.

VIOLET

I'm Violet. Your next door neighbor.

She notices Joan's appearance.

VIOLET

Oh no. I woke you up didn't I?

Joan sticks her hand out.

JOAN

It's fine. I should've been up long time ago. I'm Joan.

Violet shakes her hand, then pushes the cookie plate forward.

VIOLET

Just wanted to be neighborly and welcome you to the neighborhood.

She winks at her.

VIOLET

Well, truth be told, I was simply dying to find out who finally bought this old house. It's been empty for years, you know.

JOAN

Yes, we know. We're going to fix it up so it will look real nice.

VIOLET

There has been plenty of people looking at it over the years, but folks get a bit jittery when they hear about the --

(whispers)

-- unpleasant history of this place.

JOAN

Yes, we are well aware of its colorful past.

VIOLET

Well, there was this one couple six years ago looking at it. They wanted to turn it into some kind of macabre Bed and Breakfast. Imagine that. Trying to cash in on another couple's tragedy.

Surprised, Joan stares at Violet.

JOAN

Lots of people are drawn to the darker side of life. I think a haunted B&B sounds interesting.

A flicker of suspicion crosses Violet face. She's about to say something, but before she gets a chance --

JOAN

I'm sorry, I have to go, but thank you so much for the cookies.

She steps back inside, shuts the door.

KITCHEN

Ron pours coffee into two mugs when Joan enters. She puts the plate of cookies on the counter.

JOAN

From our neighbor, Violet.

RON

Ooh, I like her already.

JOAN

She told me about this horrible couple trying to buy the house a few years ago and turn it into a haunted BnB.

RON

Uh oh.

JOAN

Yeah, she wasn't thrilled.

Ron takes a cookie, dips it in the coffee.

RON

Don't tell her about our plans yet. I like her cookies.

JOAN

Well, she'll find out eventually.

Ron sees the flowers lying on the counter.

RON

What happened to the vase.

JOAN

Ellie knocked it over last night. I'm surprised you didn't hear it.

Joan shows him her bandaged toe.

RON
Ouch. Poor babes.

He gives her a sympathy peck on the cheek.

JOAN
I still haven't seen her, but I
think I heard her somewhere, so...

They sip their coffees, gaze at the empty kitchen. Their eyes drift to the flowers. Joan crinkles her brow.

JOAN
That's a high jump for a cat. I'm
surprised she could get up there.

Ron smiles, mimics the Twilight Zone theme.

RON
Maybe it was the Bolen family
telling us they don't want us here.

Joan rolls her eyes, shoves a cookie in his mouth.

JOAN
There are no ghosts.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

A moving van is parked outside. MOVERS haul furniture and boxes into the house.

Violet stands on the sidewalk, watches it all.

INT. HOUSE - FIRST FLOOR HALLWAY - DAY

Joan, in the middle of the hallway, directs the movers.

A MOVER GUY brings in a king sized headboard.

JOAN
That one goes upstairs.

Frustrated, Joan glances around.

JOAN
Ronnie!

Her cell phone chimes. She checks the screen. A video call from Ruelle. Joan groans.

JOAN

Not now...

Frantic, she smoothes her hair, tries on a smile before she answers.

RUELLE's face appears on the screen. In her late 40s. Friendly, but all business.

JOAN

Hi Ruelle. I was just thinking about you.

RUELLE

Great! Already settled in then?

Nervous, Joan thinks fast.

JOAN

Just about.

RUELLE

Good to hear.

Ruelle glances down at some papers.

RUELLE

The publisher wants to know if your manuscript will be ready by the end of next month.

Joan squirms.

JOAN

Oh yes. No problem.

RUELLE

Joan, I'm not kidding. If it's not ready by then, they're going to let you go.

JOAN

I understand. I promise, Ruelle. It will be ready. You have my word.

Ruelle takes on a more supportive tone.

RUELLE

This could be your big breakthrough. You've got great potential, but you have to deliver.

JOAN

I won't let you down. I promise.

Ruelle smiles.

RUELLE
I'm here if you need help. Don't
hesitate to call.

JOAN
I will. Thank you so --

Another MOVER carries a heavy plastic trunk marked, tools. He stops in front of Joan.

MOVER
Where you want it?

Annoyed with his interruption, Joan stares at him.

JOAN
Just put it --

A knock at the door behind Ruelle.

RUELLE
A client is here. I got to go.
Don't forget to get those pages
down, okay. Speak soon.

Ruelle ends the call before Joan gets a chance to respond.

JOAN
(Hollers)
Ron! I could use some help here.

FIRST FLOOR OFFICE

A large room with empty bookshelves, two desks, two chairs, and lots of cardboard boxes.

Ron stands in the middle, stares at the boxes. He picks one at random, opens it. It's full of books. He picks one up, flips through it.

Joan sticks her head through the door.

JOAN
Ron, how about giving me a hand
with the movers?

Ron's distracted by the book.

RON
I didn't know the Voynich --

JOAN

Ron!

RON

Yes, I'm coming.

Joan sighs, then leaves.

Ron puts the book in one of the bookshelves. He's about to leave when he spots something sticking out from behind one of the boxes. He reaches down, pulls it out.

It's an old threadbare stuffed animal. Perplexed, he inspects it. Doesn't recognize it.

MEOW.

Ellie saunters in.

Surprised, Ron looks up, happy to see her. He puts the stuffed animal on one of the desks, then scoops up the cat.

RON

There you are. We were worried.

A thought comes to him. He gets up, puts Ellie on the chair.

He looks at the different boxes, finds one marked MISCELLENEOUS. He digs around in it, pulls out a tiny wireless home security camera.

Ron inspects the camera, looks at Ellie, then takes out a bag of rubber bands from the box.

He takes off Ellie's collar, attaches the camera to it with the rubber bands, then puts it back on the cat. The camera is barely visible behind the rubber bands.

RON

There. Now we don't have to go looking for you.

JOAN (O.S.)

Ron!

Irritated, Joan shows up in the doorway. She's about to give him a piece of her mind, when she sees the cat.

JOAN

Ellie. Where did you find her?

RON

She just strolled right in.

Joan picks her up, pets her, then crinkles her face.

JOAN
Geez, she smells bad.

She notices the rubber band bundle on the collar.

JOAN
What's this?

RON
It's the camera we bought for our mailbox when that guy kept stealing our mail. Now we can just check on the app where she is.

Joan nods with approval.

JOAN
(to Ellie)
Not a bad idea. What you think?
Maybe we'll have some use for him after all?

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

There's now a table and chairs in the kitchen. Moving boxes fill the counter tops.

Joan and Ron sit at the table, eat Chinese take-out by candle light. A half full bottle of wine between them.

With troubled eyes, Joan gazes around the room.

RON
What?

JOAN
You think we made the right decision?

RON
Having second thoughts?

JOAN
It's a lot bigger than I remember.
A lot older. A lot worse shape.

Ron pours them some more wine. Leaves about two inches.

JOAN
I just feel overwhelmed, I guess.

He takes her hand in his.

JOAN
It's a really big fucking job.

RON
I know you'll do great. It will be
the best haunted B&B in the state.

JOAN
But, what if it isn't?

For the first time, Joan seems vulnerable.

RON
With your creativity and vision, it
will be. I know it.

JOAN
What about our nosy neighbor?

RON
We'll deal with her when it's time.

Joan's worried eyes meet his. He kisses her hand.

RON
Hey, I have an idea. While I might
not be the best painter, or
plumber, or electrician, I am a
fantastic lover...

Joan smiles. True...

RON
So... let me take you upstairs and
help you forget all about the
house. It can wait.

Ron gets up, walks over, picks her up in his arms. He carries
her out of the kitchen, into the --

FOYER

-- up the stairs to the --

MASTER BEDROOM

Ron lays her down on the now assembled king sized bed. With
passionate and lustful expertise, he undresses Joan who
eagerly welcomes his every move.

KITCHEN

Ellie enters, strolls up to her food dish, starts to eat. The camera still attached to her collar.

Startled, by a soft CREAK, she whips her head around to the hallway. Pupils wide, on full alert. She takes a few cautious steps backward, hisses, then darts into the dining room.

MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

The morning sun casts a soft glow around the edges of the heavy window coverings.

Ron walks in from the bathroom, sees Joan asleep. He pads over, leans in for a kiss, but surprise, Joan grabs a hold of his shirt, pulls him down for a big smooch.

JOAN

Slipping out before I wake up --

Ron smiles.

JOAN

-- and hold you accountable for doing unspeakable things to me?

RON

I forgot I scheduled consultations this morning.

JOAN

I could use some consultation too.

RON

Regarding what?

JOAN

Gutter repairs.

RON

Not a subject I cover in history class.

He gives her a kiss, gets off the bed, heads to the door.

RON

I'll call you when I get a chance.

Ron leaves. Joan stretches, then gets up, walks into the --

MASTER BATHROOM

She turns on the water to the shower, takes off her clothes, then steps in under the water, closes her eyes.

MEOW

Joan opens her eyes, sees Ellie sitting in the middle of the room watching her.

JOAN

Did you decide to get a bath?

Ellie leaves. Joan smiles, grabs a bar of soap. While she lathers up --

-- a shadow briefly stops in the doorway, its outline dark and unclear, then it moves on.

FOYER

Now dressed, wet hair combed back, Joan descends the stairs.

KITCHEN

Joan looks around the kitchen. The take-out containers and wine bottle still on the table.

She grabs a garbage bag, picks up one of the take-out containers from the table. It's empty. Slightly surprised, she picks up another one. It too is empty.

Now confused, she checks the last two. Same thing. Her eyes land on the wine bottle. Empty.

She pulls out her phone from her back pocket, texts Ron.

"You probably shouldn't have eaten the leftovers. They sat out all night."

She throws the containers and wine bottle in the garbage.

FIRST FLOOR OFFICE

Joan stands surrounded by boxes. Computers and monitors are set up. Not sure where to start, she picks one box at random, peers inside. She smiles. A graduation photo of her and Ashley. She puts the photo on one of the desks.

She notices the stuffed animal. Puzzled, she studies it, then sets it back on the desk, picks up another box.

FIRST FLOOR HALLWAY

With the camping lantern in one hand, Joan carries the box down the hall to the basement door.

BASEMENT

Joan makes her way down the stairs into the dark basement.

She shines the light around, not sure where to put the box.

CHIRP

A text alert from her phone. She puts the box down, pulls out her cell, reads the message from Ron.

"Didn't eat any leftovers. Grabbed an egg sandwich at the coffee shop down the street."

With a smirk, Joan sits down on the stairs. Texts him back.

"What about the wine?"

Her eyes drift around the dark space.

CHIRP

"I'm not a wine for breakfast kind of guy. Lol."

MEOW

Joan looks up the stairs. Ellie sits in the doorway. Watches.

Joan remembers, scrolls her phone for the camera app, finds it, clicks it. The app opens. She pushes some links, gets a page with camera history.

There are several video clips from the night before. Joan clicks on the oldest one from 1:12 am.

PET-CAM VIDEO ON PHONE

Grainy monochrome colors.

Ellie enters the office, jumps up into a chair, makes one circle, then lies down.

Joan clicks on the next one. 3:24 am.

The camera moves down the first floor hallway, then turns into the kitchen, stops by the food dish. CRUNCH. CRUNCH.

Joan smiles, clicks on one from 3:25 am.

CRUNCH. CRUNCH. Ellie eats her food, then the camera jerks, snaps to the side. The doorway to the hallway in view.

The camera stays still.

A slight CREAK. Like a footfall on a floorboard.

The camera whips to the left, speeds into the dining room. Out the other doorway into the first floor hallway.

Up the staircase. Into the master bedroom where Joan is asleep. Then the camera dashes in under the bed, and stops.

BACK TO SCENE

With her face lit only by the phone's eerie glow, Joan pushes replay. She increases the volume, focusing on the creak.

She gazes into the dark, suddenly ominous basement.

An unfinished, spacious area with bare brick walls, crumbling cement, dry wood, and an old workbench with a sink.

Apprehensive, she gets up, shines the lantern around. With eyes sharp, she continues further into the room, notices water dripping in the sink. She turns the faucet off.

Creepy sounds from the inner workings of the old house makes it seem extra sinister.

She comes upon locked door. Surprised, she feels the doorknob. Locked. She puts her ear to the door. No sounds.

Joan backs away from the door, back towards the stairs.

She takes a few backward steps up the stairs, turns, then runs the last few until she's in the --

FIRST FLOOR HALLWAY

Joan slams the door shut, stares at it, face flushed. After a moment, she walks into the --

FIRST FLOOR OFFICE

Joan takes a deep breath to collect herself. Once calm, she chuckles at her own silliness.

She plops down by one of the desks, scribbles on a notepad, "Ideas: Possible footstep captured on pet-cam".

CHIRP

A text from Ashley. Joan lights up with a genuine smile.

"I'll be there in two hours."

Joan uses voice to text to answer.

JOAN

Two hours? Is your broom broken?

"Lol! I can't wait to sit with you in a creepy spot and drink wine and brainstorm scary shit!"

Joan laughs, then speaks into the phone.

JOAN

Set that broom on fire, girl, and get your ass down here, so we can get started!

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Out by the curb, Joan smashes cardboard boxes, bundles them neatly for recycling. Lost in thought, she pauses, peers up the house, her expression tinged with doubt.

Violet exits her house next door with a small dog on a leash. A basket filled with wrapped sandwiches hangs on one arm, a big umbrella with a beautiful handle on the other.

She waves to Joan, walks over.

VIOLET

How's the unpacking going?

JOAN

(distracted)

Hmm? Oh, we're getting there.

Joan notices the umbrella, peers up at the blue sky.

JOAN

Expecting rain?

Violet leans in a little closer, lowers her voice.

VIOLET

It's a tactical umbrella. For self defense, you know. You never know when it could come in handy.

Joan holds back a smile. Violet notices.

VIOLET

You might see a clear blue sky, dear, but the darkest clouds can appear out of nowhere.

Joan's eyes meet Violet's with a flicker of unease.

Violet turns to look up at the house. The heavy drapes look old, gives the house an extra gloomy appearance.

VIOLET

I sewed those drapes for Kathryn, you know.

JOAN

Missus Bolen? You knew her?

VIOLET

I don't think anyone really knew her or the kids. That evil husband of hers made sure of that.

A somber atmosphere descends around them.

The dog pees on one of the cardboard bundles.

VIOLET

Oh, how rude of me. This is Chester. The last gift from my late husband.

An awkward moment.

JOAN

Oh, I'm so sorry for your loss.

Violet half-smiles. Eyes cloud with a hint of regret.

VIOLET

He was old and confused. It was time.

Unsure how to respond, Joan resorts to bundle boxes, but then stops and turns to Violet.

JOAN

Did you ever... notice anything
strange over at our house?

Violet casts a slightly suspicious glance at Joan, then turns
her eyes on the house.

VIOLET

Chester barks at it sometimes. I
think he senses the tormented
spirits of Kathryn and the
children.

Joan stifles an eye roll.

JOAN

What about squatters? Did you ever
notice anything like that?

Guarded, Violet almost seems offended.

VIOLET

Squatters? No. Absolutely not. This
is a good neighborhood.

JOAN

I didn't mean --

VIOLET

Besides, if anyone needs shelter,
they go to St. Francis House down
the street.

JOAN

St. Francis House?

VIOLET

They have free meals and beds
there.

She gestures at her basket, with pride.

VIOLET

This is lunch for some of the boys.

Chester barks at the house. Violet's face tightens. She tugs
on Chester's leash.

VIOLET

I need to get going. The less
fortunate are waiting.

With a stiff smile, she's off. Joan watches her leave.

INT. HOUSE - FIRST FLOOR - HALLWAY - DAY

Moving boxes still crowd the hallway including two larger plastic trunks marked "tools". Joan looks through them until she finds what she's looking for. A tool belt. She straps it on, attaches a cordless drill, hammer, screws...

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

A car pulls up to the curb. Ashley, in black and purple flowing clothes, designer shades, and hoop earrings, works her way out from the back seat. She keeps a tight grip on a intricately carved black cane. She grabs her travel bag.

The car drives off.

With a big smile, Ashley takes in the house. With a heavy limp, she makes her way up the steps to the front door, taps a courtesy knock with the cane, then tries the doorknob.

INT. HOUSE - FOYER - DAY

Joan grins with excitement, yanks the door open.

They both squeal at the sight of each other. Joan throws her arms around Ashley for a big hug.

JOAN

Ashley, thank you for coming.

Ashley squeezes her back. Bubbly as usual.

ASHLEY

Why wouldn't I. After all, we haven't seen each other since, what, last Thursday?

They giggle, let go of each other.

JOAN

How long are you staying?

Ashley drops her bag and purse near the door. She glances around, nods with approval.

ASHLEY

Girl, I think I'm moving in.

Joan shoots her a devilish smile, mimics Vincent price.

JOAN

I have just the room.

Ashley fakes terror. She notices Joan's tool belt.

ASHLEY
You need any help?

Joan pats her tool belt.

JOAN
Just a leak in the back. Nothing I
can't handle.

ASHLEY
Okay, while you fix that, I need to
go to a store. Got one nearby?

JOAN
Just let Ron take you later.

Ashley looks at her smart watch.

ASHLEY
I still need to get two thousand
more steps in today.

JOAN
You sure?

ASHLEY
Yes. You go ahead, take care of
that leak. I'll be fine.

Joan leaves out the front door with a bounce in her step.

Ashley breathes in, soaks up the ominous atmosphere. She takes a quick look into the kitchen, then strolls down the --

FIRST FLOOR HALLWAY

A sneak peek into the office, then on to the basement. She opens the door, flips the light switch. Nothing happens.

She shuts the door, limps back to the front door, reaches for her purse when her gaze drifts up the ominous staircase to the second floor. Curiosity and intrigue take over, she sets her purse back down, climbs the stairs.

EXT. HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY

After years of neglect the backyard is overgrown with dense underbrush, thorny vines, and a wild tangle of weeds.

Joan heads to a dislodged gutter at the back corner, inspects the broken brackets when something catches her eye.

A barely visible small shed by the rear fence. Bushes and weeds cover the walls, reach over the roof.

Joan works her way towards the shed through the underbrush.

It's the same height as her and the door is only five feet tall. It has no lock on it. She opens it.

It's dark in there. Empty beside a bag of concrete mix that lies on top of the plywood floor and an old rusty shovel.

Joan looks around, then shuts the door.

INT. HOUSE - SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - DAY

Ashley reaches the top of the stairs. Her eyes wide as she scans the place, listens for unusual sounds.

She peeks inside the master bedroom, then continues down the hall to the murder room, stops outside. She hesitates, reaches for the doorknob. It's unlocked. She opens it.

MEOOW

Startled, she turns around, then smiles. Ellie approaches her in the hallway.

ASHLEY
Hello, Miss Ellie.

The cat sits down. Ashley pets her, then turns back to the murder room, takes a deep breath, steps inside.

MURDER ROOM

Ashley strolls around, takes in all the details.

ASHLEY
People are gonna love this.

She stops in the middle of the room. Her eyes flick over every corner, every shadow. She rests the cane against her hip, takes a deep, grounding breath, then stretches her arms out to the sides, palms up. Her eyes flutter closed.

A slight CREAK is heard.

Ashley listens intently with her eyes shut, then continues.

ASHLEY

I come before you with respect and
humility. If you are here --

MEOW

Annoyed, but keeps her eyes shut.

ASHLEY

Not now, Ellie. I'm busy.

(deep breath)

I come before you with respect and
humility. If you are here, make
your presence known.

Another creak, then a shadow creeps over her.

Sensing something, she opens her eyes, turns around. Freezes.
Her eyes grow wide in fear. Jaw drops ready to scream.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY

Joan completes the gutter repair, gathers her tools, and
heads to the front of the house.

INT. HOUSE - FOYER - DAY

Joan enters. Notices Ashley's bags are gone. She shuts the
door, walks down the --

FIRST FLOOR HALLWAY

-- to the end near the office and the basement door. She
swaps her tool belt for the toolbox, heads into the --

KITCHEN

Late afternoon sun casts a yellow light in the room.

Joan, AirPods in her ears sets down her toolbox, checks her
phone. No new texts from Ashley. She voice-texts.

JOAN

Everything okay?

Joan opens the cupboard underneath the sink, grabs a bucket
and a pipe wrench, then drops to her knees. She looks inside,
retrieves a well used trouble light from the toolbox.

She plugs it in. Nothing. Sighs, then removes the cage, unscrews the light bulb. She rummages through a box of household items. No new bulbs.

Frustrated, she uses her phone's flashlight instead, then gets to work, lost in her music.

The sound of someone opening the front door.

Ron walks in. Surprised to see her under the sink. He waves, gets closer, finally touches her leg.

Startled, Joan bangs her head on the old drain pipe.

JOAN

Ah! What the --?

RON

Sorry, didn't mean to scare you.

She wiggles out from underneath the sink.

RON

Guess what? One of my students is investigating local ghost stories.

JOAN

Really? Something i can use?

Ron holds up a paper bag.

RON

I'll tell you over dinner.

Joan puts down her tools. With playful accusatory eyes --

JOAN

Speaking of food. Are you sure you didn't eat the leftover Chinese?

RON

I was asleep. Next to you.

Joan doesn't buy it.

JOAN

Mhm. Let me show you something.

She walks off. Ron trudges after her.

FIRST FLOOR OFFICE

Joan walks in followed by Ron. She gestures for him to sit. She wakes the computer, opens the pet-cam app.

JOAN

Sooo... how do you explain this?

She turns up the volume.

Ron waits as the video begins to play on the big monitor.

CRUNCH. CRUNCH. Ellie eats. The camera jerks, snaps to the side. The doorway to the hallway in view.

The camera stays still.

A slight CREAK. A careful footfall.

The camera whips left, speeds into the dining room, out the doorway into the hallway.

Joan hits pause, pins him with a questioning stare.

RON

What?

Joan re-plays the creak.

JOAN

That! Clearly, it's you sneaking into the kitchen.

Annoyed, Ron stands up.

RON

Geez Joan. I did not go down there.

JOAN

Well, someone ate all the food. And, finished off the wine.

Ron smiles, tries to lighten the mood.

RON

Maybe it was Missus Bolen's ghost and she had the munchies?

Joan sours.

JOAN

Well, next time I go to the store, I'll buy her some food so she doesn't have to steal ours.

Joan huffs, stomps out of the room.

RON
Jonesy. C'mon.

Ron sighs, follows her into the --

FIRST FLOOR HALLWAY

He catches up, hurries past, blocks her.

RON
I'm sorry, okay? I was joking.

Joan softens. Then she notices the basement door.

JOAN
We need to find the key to this.
There's also a locked door in the
basement. We need to find out
what's behind it.

RON
Tomorrow, I'll buy a new lock and
fix the light, then we'll check
that door. I'm capable of simple
things like that.

He takes her hand.

RON
Let's eat.

DINING ROOM - LATER

Dusk outside.

Modern furniture clashes terribly with the old decor.

Joan and Ron sit at the table, eating. Joan has her phone to her ear. Deep concern on her face.

JOAN
I don't get it. She doesn't answer
her calls or texts.

RON
Maybe something happened back home
and she had to leave.

JOAN
Without telling me?

RON

You said she took her bag with her.
She wouldn't do that if she only
went to the store.

Joan's unsure.

JOAN

It's just not like her. Maybe we
should call the police?

RON

I know you're worried, but she's
only been gone five hours.

She lays her phone down, switches gears, but stays worried.

JOAN

You were going to tell me about the
consultation.

RON

Yes, interesting, to say the least.
Apparently, this town has a lot of
dark corners. Not just the kind
kids talk about at sleepovers
either. Get this, he wants to
highlight those that have been
rumored to have some supernatural
elements to them.

Joan's mind is elsewhere.

JOAN

Really?

RON

That could be marketing gold if he
wrote something about this house.

Joan finally heard what he said.

JOAN

Violet told me we have a homeless
shelter down the street.

RON

That's good they have a place,
isn't it?

JOAN

Yes of course, but we want to
attract people who believe in
ghosts.

(MORE)

JOAN (CONT'D)

No one is going to stay here
because they like being scared of
the locals.

RON

I doubt the people you want to
attract to this BnB will be scared
off by homeless people.

She glances at her phone. Ron notices.

RON

She probably got distracted by
something. She's like a raven that
way. Sees something shiny and...

Joan sighs.

RON

I'll be in the office. I have a
reference letter to draft.

Ron gets up, kisses Joan on top of her head, then leaves.

Joan peers outside.

A view of Violet's dark house. A figure darts out of view in
one of the windows.

Joan frowns, pulls the thick curtains shut.

MASTER BEDROOM - LATER

Joan sits in bed with her laptop. She clicks through various
antique light fixture photos. Ellie sleeps in Ron's spot.

She looks at the clock on the bedside table. 11:30pm.

There's a faint sound of footsteps out in the hallway.

JOAN

Ron.

A low, barely audible GRUNT answers her.

JOAN

Would you bring me a cup of tea
when you come back?

Another grunt that sounds like a "yeah".

She continues to look at pictures. Ellie stares at the
hallway. Pupils wide.

A few moments later, Ron shuffles into the room.

RON
Enough for today, I'm exhausted.

JOAN
What about my tea?

Ron takes off his clothes on the way to the bathroom.

RON
What about your tea?

JOAN
I asked you to bring me a cup.

RON
I'm sorry, honey. I must not have heard you.

JOAN
But you answered me...

Ron looks back at her.

RON
No. I didn't.

He continues into the bathroom, turns on the shower.

Joan gets out of bed, heads out into the --

SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY

A faint light from the kitchen downstairs. Lots of dark spaces everywhere. Anything could be hiding in them...

Joan takes a few steps down the staircase. Stops. She crinkles her nose. Sniffs the air, then continues down.

FIRST FLOOR HALLWAY

Suspicious. On alert. Joan peers down the hallway. It ends in complete darkness. She reaches out, turns on the foyer light.

Everything is quiet. Still.

KITCHEN

Joan enters, decides she's being silly, grabs a mug, fills it with water, then puts it in the microwave.

MASTER BEDROOM

Ron exits the bathroom, climbs into bed when Joan enters with a mug in hand. She sits down in bed, pulls the covers up.

JOAN
You know, if I didn't know better,
I would almost think that there's
someone in this house.

Ron eyes her with a cocked brow.

RON
What makes you think that?

JOAN
The missing food, the open basement
door, that smell.

RON
I don't smell anything.

JOAN
Like bad body odor, or worse.
Something dead.

RON
I'll check the attic tomorrow.
Maybe a mouse died up there.

Deep in thought, Joan sips her tea.

RON
Be great for business though if
this house actually was haunted.

Joan scoffs. Ron turns on his side to go to sleep.

She puts the mug and laptop away, lies down.

She tosses, turns, but sleep doesn't come. She's wide awake.

She reaches for her phone and the mug, gets out of bed, then tiptoes out into the --

SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY

Joan glances downstairs, then sits down against the wall where she can see both floors.

With the phone in hand, she sits in the dark, alert. Waits...

LATER

Joan's eyelids become heavy. She fights to keep them up. A moment later, her eyes shut. The phone slips out of her hand.

A few seconds later. A faint CLICK from downstairs.

Ellie trots out from the master bedroom. She walks right past Joan down the stairs.

Strange sounds of movement from downstairs followed by a friendly MEOW.

SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - DAY

Joan's asleep on the floor.

RON (O.S.)

Joan?

Joan startles awake. Blinks hard. Getting her bearings.

RON

What are you doing out here?

She looks around. Disoriented.

JOAN

Uh. I must have fallen asleep.

She clambers to her feet.

JOAN

I couldn't sleep. I figured --

Ron gives her a peck on the cheek.

RON

Try the bed next time. They are made for sleeping.

Joan's lost. Tries to remember.

JOAN

-- I'd stay up and see if...

RON

I have to drive back up to Bridgeview and pick up a few things and then hit up the library there. It's much more comprehensive than the one down here.

Still disoriented, she watches Ron dash off down the stairs. Then she remembers. In a hurry, she snatches up her phone, checks it. Nothing new from Ashley. She slumps her shoulder.

JOAN

(voice-text)

Hey, can you give me call when you get a chance? I'm getting a little worried about you.

She hits send.

MASTER BATHROOM

Joan's in the shower.

Ellie strolls in, licks her mouth like she just ate.

Joan notices, grabs a towel, then steps out, pets the cat.

JOAN

Did you eat something yummy?

Ellie meets her eyes with a secretive cat's gaze.

FIRST FLOOR OFFICE

Dressed and fresh with a cup of coffee, Joan sits, then turns on her computer. The stuffed animal is gone...

She scrolls through some stuff online. Emails. Social media.

A call is coming in from Ruelle on Facetime.

Joan pulls her hands away from the computer as if she just got shocked by it. Nervous, she stares at the screen. The ringtone seems loud, demanding.

Joan buries her face in her hands with a heavy sigh. After a beat, she picks up her phone, uses voice to text.

JOAN

Ash, where are you? I really need that brainstorming session with you or I'm gonna be in trouble.

Ellie saunters in with a MEOW.

Joan pets her, then clicks on the pet-cam app on the computer. Fifty or so new videos. Most of the thumbnails look the same. Blurry and monochrome. She clicks on the third newest one. Time stamp, 12:23 am.

The video fills the big monitor. It shows the camera moving from the bedroom into the hallway past Joan asleep.

Smiling, she watches Ellie head downstairs to the kitchen, rub against the door frame, PURR and then a friendly MEOW.

The video shows only the kitchen floor, but Ellie acts as if she's being petted. The video ends. Joan frowns.

The newest one has a thumbnail that looks like a possible human shape. Time stamp 7:19 am. She starts the video. It's Joan in the shower.

JOAN

Oh God!

She deletes the file, then clicks the second video. Time stamp 7:14 am.

The video shakes while Ellie trots along the second floor hallway, down the stairs, into the kitchen, then straight to her food dish where some food awaits.

Joan stops the video, stares at the screen for a beat, then replays the part of Ellie heading to her food dish. Off to the side of the frame is the front of a man's shoe.

She pauses the video, enlarges the picture of the shoe. It looks old. Dirty.

The video's time stamp. 7:14 am. Her phone now. 7:31 am.

A little spooked, Joan glances at the door to the hallway, gets up. Listens. She hits dial on her phone.

INT. CAR - MOVING - DAY

Ron sings along to loud music. His phone, on the passenger seat, shows an incoming call from Joan. He doesn't notice.

INT. HOUSE - FIRST FLOOR HALLWAY - DAY

Joan walks out of the office, stares at her phone. Call has ended. She sends a text to Ron instead.

"Did you feed Ellie this morning?"

Still on edge, she looks down the hallway, then up the staircase. She heads into the --

KITCHEN

-- grabs a knife from a butcher's block. With the phone in one hand, the knife in the other, she pads into the --

FOYER

She stands still, listens. Except for outside noises, it's quiet. Joan peers up to the second floor. Her eyes land on the attic trap door. Wary, she moves up the stairs.

SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY

Phone ready to dial, knife tightly gripped, Joan approaches the attic at the darker end of the hallway.

She stops underneath the trap door, peers up at it, then pulls it down. The ladder unfolds with a CREAK.

She climbs a few steps, pulls the light chain. The bulb is dead. She turns on the phones' flashlight, climbs up higher.

ATTIC

Joan sweeps her flashlight around the dark, dusty, unsettling space. Nothing seems out of place. She listens intently.

JOAN

Hello? Anyone up here?

Only silence. Then --

-- a RAT drops down from above.

Joan SCREAMS! Almost falls off the ladder.

The rat skitters away into the dark.

SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY

Joan climbs down the ladder, pushes it back in place, shuts the trap door. She takes a moment to collect herself.

Cautious, she takes the stairs back down to the --

FIRST FLOOR HALLWAY

Joan stops, gazes into the shadows at the end of the hallway.

A faint sound of a child WHISPERING coming from the dark.

She pads towards the basement door. The knife pointing forward. The door is open a crack.

The WHISPER comes from down there. Joan opens the door.

CREAK. The whispering stops.

She peers inside. Pitch black down there. Guided by the phone's light, she steps down into the dark --

BASEMENT

Joan shines the light. It's creepy as hell. She sniffs the air, grimaces in disgust.

She continues on. Reaches that locked door. It's ajar...

Joan freezes, stares at the door. With a tight grip on the knife, the phone held out front, she steps closer.

JOAN

Hello. Anyone there?

She tries to get a peek behind the door, but can't see anything. On edge, she eases it open all the way.

CREAK.

Behind it is a brick wall.

She takes a step closer, inspects the wall. There's nothing there. Confused, she takes a step back. She's about to close the door when there's a muffled sound from somewhere.

Joan leans in to the wall, puts her ear against it, listens.

Definitely some kind of sound from the other side, like someone moving around.

Suspicious, tense, she takes a quiet step away, shines the light across the dark basement. All clear. She moves backwards up the stairs, spins around, rushes the last part.

FIRST FLOOR HALLWAY

Joan bursts into the hallway, shuts the door, looks around for something. Sees her big tool box outside their office. She hurries over, grabs a crowbar, then jams it into the gap under the basement door.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Overcast. Lead-grey clouds threaten rain.

Joan hurries down the steps to the sidewalk where she stops. She stares back up at the house.

Ominous. The dark windows, like evil unblinking eyes.

On her phone, she pushes Ron's number.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Ron strolls into the library. Like all libraries, the volume is low. Everyone keeps quiet.

A loud ringtone plays. All eyes on Ron who digs in his pocket, fumbles with his phone before he powers it off.

Embarrassed, he mouths to everyone --

RON

Sorry.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

On Joan's phone, "Call ended". She clenches her jaw.

JOAN

Dammit, Ron! Answer your phone.

Joan looks around. Not sure what to do, decides to call 911.

JOAN

Could you please send somebody? I think there's someone in our house.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Ron settles in in front of a microfiche reader. His phone visible in his back pocket.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

A police cruiser rolls into the driveway where Joan awaits.

Two police officers, DARNELL, 50s, and JACKSON, 30s, get out of the car.

OFFICER DARNELL
Ma'am, are you the one that called
about an intruder in your house?

JOAN
Yes. But, I don't know for a fact
that there is someone inside. I was
just hoping you could do a search?

OFFICER DARNELL
How many entrances are there?

JOAN
Just two. The front door and a side
door. The side door is bolted shut.

The two officers exchange a quick glance.

OFFICER DARNELL
All right. For your safety, please
wait here while we search your
house.

JOAN
Be sure to check the basement,
please. I heard some noise down
there.

Both officers get their flashlights out, flip off the
retention straps on their firearms, then approach the house.

With caution, Darnell pushes the front door open.

OFFICER DARNELL
Police department. Make yourself
known. We're coming in.

They disappear into the house.

Joan watches with unease.

INT. VIOLET'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

With concern etched on her face, Violet peeks out the window
at Joan by the cruiser, her hands, clasped on her chest.

INT. HOUSE - SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - DAY

Officer Jackson emerges from the master bedroom. He shines
his light down the hallway, sees the closed door further
down. He puts his hand on his gun, approaches with caution.
Taps on the door with his flashlight.

OFFICER JACKSON
Police department. If you're in
there, make yourself known.

He reaches for the door knob, opens the door, steps inside.

MURDER ROOM

Wide eyed on high alert, he pulls his gun out, then speaks
into his shoulder mic.

OFFICER JACKSON
Darnell, I need you up here, second
floor, room at the end of the
hallway. Expedite.

Eyes as big as saucers, he shines his light on all the old
blood stains, and on the floor a hoop earring...

Urgent FOOTSTEPS thud outside in the hallway, then Darnell
hurries inside, gun drawn.

OFFICER DARNELL
You all right?

OFFICER JACKSON
Would you look at this...

Darnell smiles, puts his gun back in the holster, pats
Jackson on his shoulder.

OFFICER DARNELL
Relax, man. You're looking at the
city's notorious old horror story.

Jackson stares at him, puts his gun away.

OFFICER JACKSON
Really? And they moved in here
willingly?

Darnell shrugs.

OFFICER DARNELL
The world is full of weirdos into
weird shit.

They turn to leave.

OFFICER JACKSON
Find anything in the basement?

OFFICER DARNELL
Nah, ran into a brick wall.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

A light sprinkle falls on Joan as she stands by the curb.

The two officers exit the house, walk up to her.

OFFICER DARNELL
Ma'am, I don't know what to tell
you. Must just be some noises from
the house itself. Old houses
sometimes have peculiar
personalities and over time it
settles making doors creak on
crooked hinges. Pipes gurgling...

Joan sees Violet watching from her window.

OFFICER DARNELL
If you notice anything else, more
tangible, just give us a call.

JOAN
I will. Thank you for coming.

They get in their car.

Joan turns to look at the house. She's not satisfied. She
heads around the side of the house towards the back.

EXT. HOUSE - BACKSIDE - DAY

The rain is picking up.

Joan rounds the corner. Studies the back wall, tries to
calculate where the space behind the brick wall might be.

Waist-high bushes line the wall. Joan takes a step closer,
pushes some of the bushes aside to get a better view behind.

She thinks for a moment, turns to gaze at the shed, then
heads over to it.

Joan opens the door, leans in to grab the shovel when she
sees the concrete mix bag on the floor. It has been moved.
It's in the same area, but not the exact same position.

With a frown, Joan stares at the bag, then ducks and steps
inside.

INT. GARDEN SHED - DAY

The rain drums on the metal shed isolating it from the outside world.

Joan bends down, pushes on the bag. The heavy bag easily slides aside. It's on a swivel cover.

A quick glance over her shoulder to the outside, then she pushes the plate off the edge of the plywood floor. She grabs the edge of the wood floor. It's not attached.

Joan, manages to pull it up, leans it against the wall. She stares down at a two foot wide dark hole with a rickety ladder in it. WTF...

She fishes her phone out of her back pocket, turns on the flash, shines it down into the hole.

Wary, but intrigued, she climbs the steps down.

JOAN

(under her breath)

What the hell are you doing, Joan?

VERTICAL SHAFT

Joan climbs down the nine feet to the bottom where another opening awaits. It's a four foot tall tunnel with dirt floor and walls.

With the phone's light held out ahead, she peers into the black void.

TUNNEL

Crouched down, Joan enters, casting tense, wary glances over her shoulder every now and then.

The tunnel is long, but she finally reaches the end.

Three decrepit wooden steps lead down inside. The space is no bigger than a large walk-in closet. An old root cellar?

Joan freezes when she sees a small door on the left wall. It has a big padlock on it.

ROOT CELLAR

Intrigued, but tense, Joan carefully steps down into the room. She checks out the door and lock, rattles it, but there's no way to open it without a key.

She turns to leave, but noticing something out of the corner of her eye. She shines her light on it. A dirty silk scarf.

Joan leans forward to pick it up. Just when she's about to grab it, it moves.

Startled, Joan gasps, then after a moment, she lifts the scarf. Underneath, two rats peer up at her. SQUEAK. SQUEAK.

Disgusted, Joan shudders, drops the scarf.

The rats scurry out, run towards Joan who makes a panicked dash up the rotten wood steps.

CRACK

The middle step breaks. Her leg sinks right through it up to her knee. The jagged edges dig deep down into her skin.

AHHHH! Joan screams in agony. Pants hard.

The rats scamper over her into the tunnel. AHHHH.

Freaked out, Joan aims the flash into the tunnel, sees the rats run away.

She shines the light at her leg. Blood oozes out. It looks grotesque. She tries to pull her leg out of there, but the sharp wood acts like a Chinese finger trap. She's stuck.

With anger mixed with frustration and pain, Joan snuffles, then lets out a HOWL.

She stares at her leg, touches the big splinters dug into her skin, then shudders in pain.

JOAN

Fuck.

She checks he phone's battery. 13% left. Signal strength, one bar. She dials Ron's number. It goes straight to voicemail.

JOAN

(into phone)

Ron, where are you? I really need you to come home.

She glances around the room.

JOAN

I'm in this fucking root cellar or something. I fell and got hurt. I'm hurt bad. Please, call. I need you.

She ends the call.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Ron sits glued to the microfiche reader. Wide eyed, he reads an old newspaper article.

"TRAGEDY STRIKES OUR COMMUNITY: Father Kills Wife, Two Children"

A grainy picture of a mean looking son of a bitch is next to the article.

"Police believe that Brent Bolen shot his wife and two children before turning the gun on himself. The motive behind the tragedy remains unclear."

Ron stares at the screen, jots down notes in a notebook.

A LIBRARIAN, 60s, approaches Ron. She's plump, dressed conservatively. She stops next to him.

LIBRARIAN

Must be an interesting subject.

Startled, Ron turns to her.

LIBRARIAN

You've been at it all day.

Ron's surprised, checks his watch.

RON

Shit! Oh, sorry...

LIBRARIAN

We're about to close. I figured you wouldn't want to spend the night.

Ron gathers up his stuff.

RON

I was doing some research and then one thing led to another and I lost track of time.

The librarian notices the old news article on the screen.

She shuts down the machine.

LIBRARIAN

Are you a writer? That's usually who uses these. And, detectives, of course, but you don't look like one of those.

Ron smiles.

RON

I teach history.

LIBRARIAN

Must be the darker side of history.

They walk together towards the exit.

RON

One of my students is writing a paper on local history. The kind of history people rather sweep under the rug than celebrate.

LIBRARIAN

Young people are often drawn to the macabre. Or the horrific in the case of the Bolen murders.

RON

Are you familiar with the case?

She holds the door open for Ron. It's dusk outside with a slight drizzle.

LIBRARIAN

Sometimes you see and hear things if you keep your eyes and ears open.

Ron pauses.

RON

Know anything about that case that never made it into the news?

The librarian hesitates for a beat, then --

LIBRARIAN

There were some rumors that the house itself was evil and drove the husband to madness.

Ron gazes at her.

RON

Really?

LIBRARIAN

Supposedly, Henry Witford, who built the house in 1898 killed his whole family. Wife and three kids, then buried them and built the house on top of their graves. But, this is just pure speculation. Still... it's hard to ignore that the house has been marked by tragedy ever since.

Fascinated, Ron takes this in.

RON

Wow. I think I'll have to look deeper into that. Thank you.

They share a smile, then Ron hurries off to his car while she locks up.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Ron gets inside, powers up his phone. As soon as it's ready, he notices the missed calls and texts from Joan. He cringes.

RON

Ah geez.

He clicks on the voicemail, then starts up the car.

VOICEMAIL

(on car speakers)

Ron, where are you? I really need you to come home. I'm in this fucking root cellar or something. I fell and got hurt. I'm hurt bad. Please, call. I need you.

Ron, frowns, pulls out into traffic.

RON

What the hell. Siri, call Joan.

SIRI

Calling Joan.

RON

Come on, come on!

INT. HOUSE - ROOT CELLAR - NIGHT

The phone is propped up on one of the steps. The flash is aimed at Joan who sits on the broken step.

With her hands bloody, she works to get the dirty pieces of wood out of her leg.

Pearls of sweat dot her pale face. She holds her breath while she pushes on the wood. It gives a few millimeters.

Her cell phone rings.

Joan stares at her phone, then back at her leg. She reaches for the phone, but her hands are wet and slippery with blood.

The phone drops onto the dirt floor. She strains to reach it, picks it up. It's now covered in blood and dirt. She tries to push the slider to answer, but the screen can't read her bloody finger. It won't respond.

JOAN
C'mon! Godammit!

The phone stops ringing.

Joan notices the battery is down to 9%. She tries to clean off the phone, then dials Ron back.

INT. CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

With worry on his face, Ron speeds through town.

His phone rings. Using the car's bluetooth, he answers.

RON
Joan! What the hell is going on?

INT. HOUSE - ROOT CELLAR - NIGHT

Joan snuffles, relieved to get a hold of Ron.

JOAN
(into phone)
Oh, thank God! I fell and got hurt.
One of the steps broke and my leg
went right through.

INTERCUT

Ron's eyes grow wide.

RON
Have you called 911?

JOAN
No. I'm not dying. I'm just hurt
and stuck. I want you to help me
and then you can take me to the ER.

RON
Just hang on, Joan. I should be
there in less than thirty.

JOAN
It hurts.

Joan's phone switches to low power mode. She looks at the screen. The light's dimmed. She tries to hold back her tears.

JOAN
I think I found the room behind
that door. It's an old --

Ron listens while he concentrates on the traffic. Someone pulls out in front of him. TOOTS their horn. Ron swerves.

RON
Whoa! Shit.

JOAN
-- root cellar, I guess, and that's
where the step broke.

Ron missed that part of her sentence.

Joan glances at her screen. Speaks fast.

JOAN
My phone is almost dead, I'm going
to hang up so I don't have to sit
here in the dark. Hurry home, okay.

RON
Yes. Yes, of course. I'll be there
soon. Love you.

Ron clenches the steering wheel, pushes down the gas pedal.

END INTERCUT

INT. VIOLET'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Violet stands in the dark, gazes out the window with great concern. She turns to Chester who sits on the floor.

VIOLET

I don't know what to do, Chester.

He wags his tail. She turns back to the window.

VIOLET

I have a bad feeling this won't end well.

INT. HOUSE - ROOT CELLAR - NIGHT

Joan puts her phone on the step next to her. The dim light from its screen barely illuminates her face.

She looks down at her leg. The blood looks like tar.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Ron's car peels into the driveway. He jumps out, hurries up to the front door, in to the --

INT. HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT

-- where he runs to the basement door, yanks it open. Using his phone's flash, Ron rushes down the stairs.

BASEMENT

Ron, takes the steps two at the time.

RON

Joan! I'm here. Joan!

He shines the light around. Searches.

RON

Joan? Where are you?

Frantic, he searches the whole basement. The door with the brick wall behind it is now closed.

RON

Joansey! Where the hell are you?

ROOT CELLAR

Quiet in here. No sound penetrates these dirt walls.

Joan sits on the floor. She stares at the screen of her phone. Only 4% battery power left.

JOAN
C'mon honey. Hurry home. I don't
want to sit here by myself.

SQUEAK.

Joan freezes in terror.

JOAN
No. No. No. No.

She turns on the phone's flash, shines it into the tunnel.

JOAN
(yelling)
Go away! Don't you fucking come
this way!

Her phone dies. Pitch-black. Joan sniffles.

JOAN
No. Please. Not now.

BASEMENT

Confused, Ron looks around the empty space, then turns to his phone, calls Joan. It immediately goes to voicemail.

RON
Where are you, babe? I'm right here
in the basement.

He ends the call, confused. He runs back up the stairs.

SERIES OF SHOTS

-- Ron checks the kitchen.

-- The dining room.

-- Ron's office.

-- The master bedroom and bath.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY

Ron steps out of the master bedroom with a frown. He stops, thinks back.

RON
Root cellar?

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

The front door swings open. Ron bursts out of the house. With a flashlight in one hand, phone in the other he runs to the --

REAR OF THE HOUSE

Bushes, weeds and vines everywhere.

Ron squints through the rain, searches for an opening near the house.

RON
Joan! Jonesy!

INT. HOUSE - ROOT CELLAR - NIGHT

Complete darkness. Joan's sniffles are heard.

Very faint, barely audible like far away, Ron's voice.

RON (O.S.)
Joan!

Movement in the dark.

JOAN
Ronnie! I'm down here!

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

The rain drowns out Joan's voice.

Ron bends down, searches the ground for any signs.

VIOLET (O.S.)
Is there something wrong?

Startled, Ron looks up, shines the light on Violet who stands under her umbrella, gazes down at him. A slight sinister look about her in that light.

RON
I'm trying to find Joan. Have you
seen her?

VIOLET
No.

Desperate, Ron continues to search.

RON
She mentioned a root cellar. Any
idea where it might be?

VIOLET
I'm not aware of one.

RON
Joan!

VIOLET
I hope she's all right. I saw the
police here earlier.

Ron stares at her.

RON
Police?

VIOLET
Yes. They looked quite concerned. I
thought you knew.

RON
Why were they here? What about
Joan? She's hurt. I just talked to
her less than thirty minutes ago.

Violet peers up at the house.

VIOLET
Bad things always happen in that
house.

She turns back to Ron, pins him with an accusing glare.

VIOLET
Makes one wonder why someone would
want to live there.

Thrown off by her comment, Ron stares at her.

RON
It's Joan's way of dealing with...

Violet waits for the answer like a mean old teacher.

RON
Facing fear is her way to seek
answers for her own trauma.

Violet absorbs it for a moment.

VIOLET
If she was hurt badly, the police
might have taken her to the
hospital.

INT. HOUSE - ROOT CELLAR - NIGHT

Joan yells in the dark.

JOAN
I'm down here!

There's a sound from the tunnel.

JOAN
Thank God.

Joan peers into the tunnel. A flashlight light shines at her.
Coming closer.

JOAN
Ronnie. Help me get out of here.
I'm bleeding bad.

A male GRUNT.

JOAN
Ron?

INT. CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

The windshield wipers slap the rain off the glass. Ron
squints to better see.

INT. HOUSE - ROOT CELLAR - NIGHT

Joan peers up into the bright light of a flashlight.

A male figure climbs down the steps. Joan tries to see behind
the light.

JOAN
Ron?

She gets a whiff of him. Recoils in disgust. Fear sets in. Terror reflects in her eyes.

JOAN

Who... who are you? Where's my...
my husband?

The man reaches out with a filthy hand. Tries to touch her face. Joan leans back as far as she can to avoid him.

JOAN

Don't... don't touch me.

The man turns towards the locked door, digs a key out of his pocket, then unlocks the padlock and opens the door.

Joan stares as the man enters into another room.

A couple of strung up lightbulbs flick on.

Joan leans over, tries to see inside.

The man turns around. Joan gasps.

DEREK BOLEN (24), filthy in rags, long greasy hair, eyes sparkling with intense insanity, glares at Joan.

Joan's taken aback by his appearance.

JOAN

Who are you? What are you doing in
my house?

He steps out back into the root cellar, anger skews his face. He gets close up to Joan. Only inches away.

Joan flinches back.

DEREK

What are you doing in my house?

He gets in closer. Only inches from her face.

Joan proceeds with caution.

JOAN

It's my house. It's my name on the
deed.

A vile grin spreads across his face.

DEREK

A house stands empty eighteen years
on the dot.

(MORE)

DEREK (CONT'D)

No one gives a fuck if a missing person's name is on the deed.

Joan fights back fear.

JOAN

I'm not a missing person.

DEREK

You are now.

JOAN

My husband will find me. He will call the cops. They'll bring dogs. Do a search --

DEREK

(interrupting)

You're buried beneath the fucking earth, only the dirt can hear your screams.

Defiant, Joan yells as loud as she can.

JOAN

Help! Help! I'm down here! Help!

Derek chuckles, heads back into the secret room.

Joan looks down at her leg. Blood drizzles out of it into a big puddle. She touches the wood, but the pain is unbearable. She fights the urge to scream.

Joan leans over, tries to get a glimpse inside that hidden room. All she can see is the man's shadow on the wall.

JOAN

I need to go to the hospital. I'm hurt. I could get really sick if I don't see a doctor.

She scans the small space for ideas, finds none. She takes another peek at her leg. It looks gross.

JOAN

I could die if I don't get to a doctor. You hear me?

Derek appears in the doorway.

DEREK

No one's coming for you. You stupid cunt.

He heads back into the hidden room.

Joan sits stunned. Ponders this.

She bites down hard against the pain, forces her leg free. It looks completely mangled with a large piece of wood buried deep in her calf.

Fighting against the pain, she drags herself over to the doorway, then leans in to see inside the secret room.

Her face freezes in terror.

Derek peers over at Joan who --

SCREAMS.

CUT TO BLACK:

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Rain pours down on the huge parking lot.

Ron's car pulls in, parks askew in the first available slot. He gets out, runs inside the main entrance.

INT. HOSPITAL - LOBBY - NIGHT

With his face filled with worry, Ron stands soaked wet by the visitor's counter.

A WOMAN sits by a computer on the other side. With her brow furrowed, she shakes her head.

HOSPITAL WOMAN

I don't see anyone being admitted here with that name.

RON

Look again. She said she was hurt and that she was bleeding.

HOSPITAL WOMAN

Could she have been using a different name?

RON

A different name? No.

HOSPITAL WOMAN

We've only had three people admitted since lunch today.

(MORE)

HOSPITAL WOMAN (CONT'D)

One was a toddler and the other two were both seniors.

Ron slams his hands on the counter, then decides to keep his anger in check.

RON

She's my wife. She's injured! She left me a voicemail... she was bleeding. She must be here.

She looks up at Ron, sees his desperation, softens her tone.

HOSPITAL WOMAN

I'm truly sorry, sir.

Frantic, Ron looks around for any sign of Joan.

HOSPITAL WOMAN

Maybe you should try the police?

INT. HOUSE - ROOT CELLAR - NIGHT

Horrified, Joan shakes in fear as she stares at Ashley's dead body on the floor. Her eyes bulged out, tongue protruding, swelling around her neck.

JOAN

Ashley. Oh god. What... did you do... to her?

DEREK (O.S.)

She thought my family's pain was some fuckin' form of entertainment.

Confused, Joan's gaze drifts away from her friend to take in the rest of the room.

A crowded space from a tragic nightmare. Against the wall across the room is a small shrine made out of wood scraps. Photos of the Bolen family with THREE kids and the father meticulously cut out. Candles. A simple, but nice necklace.

There's also a cot with a dirty pillow and blanket. Old threadbare stuffed animals on top. Including the one from their office earlier.

Dark and disturbing drawings cover the walls. They show the progression of his mental state from a traumatized child to a deeply disturbed adult. A child's simple crayon creatures, to the darkest most disturbing art of violent acts.

On the floor in one corner are items from Derek's victims over the years. Wallets. Drivers licenses. Jewelry. Ashley's bag is among them.

Joan leans in further to see what's in the far corner.

In complete terror, Joan can't help but SCREAM.

Sitting on the floor, propped up against the wall are three mummified remains of a woman and two children. They are dressed in nice clothes.

Derek glares at her. Voice dripping with menace.

DEREK

This is our home. Not a haunted
house for thrill seeking tourists.

A muffled KNOCK KNOCK from the secret room.

Derek reaches over, slams the door shut in Joan's face.

Complete darkness.

Joan's shallow rapid breaths the only sound.

JOAN

(screaming)
Ronnie, I'm in here. Help!

BASEMENT

Violet stands by the mysterious brick wall, leans in to listen. She knocks on it.

Faint sounds of something scraping against it from the other side, then the brick wall is removed, revealed to be a panel.

Joan's muted screams are heard.

Derek glowers at Violet.

DEREK

What is it?

Nervous, she collects herself, tries to get a glimpse inside. Derek blocks her view.

VIOLET

(hushed)
Where is she?

DEREK
She's with me.

Violet covers her mouth, stifles a gasp.

VIOLET
The police were here.

He grits his teeth.

DEREK
What'd you tell them?

VIOLET
It was the woman who called. She's suspicious. She asked me if I had seen any squatters in here.

DEREK
And her man?

VIOLET
He was looking for her. Asked me about a root cellar.

DEREK
What'd you say to him?

VIOLET
I told him the police took her to the hospital. He's there now.

Violet waits while he mulls over the situation.

VIOLET
He'll probably go to the police after that and then they will get suspicious too. We have to decide what to do before that happens.

Derek's eyes gleam dangerously in the dim light.

DEREK
Don't worry. I got this.

He steps back into the secret room, grabs the brick panel.

Violet sees Ashley's body on the floor. Her eyes grow wide, her hand clutches her chest.

Derek notices her reaction.

DEREK
I said, I got it handled.

He slams the brick panel back in place.

Violet backs away. Panic and fear flashes across her face.

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Ron hurries out of the hospital, pushes buttons on his phone while he jogs to the parking lot.

RON
(into phone)
My wife. She's missing.

INT. POLICE STATION - LOBBY - NIGHT

A POLICE OFFICER sits behind the counter. The station appears empty, but hums with distant activity. He wears a headset and is ready to type on a computer.

POLICE OFFICER
How long has she been missing?

INTERCUT

Ron reaches his car, checks his watch.

RON
I'm not sure. An hour. Maybe two.

The officer, sighs, leans back in his chair.

POLICE OFFICER
That's not very long, sir.

RON
You have to find her. I know something's wrong.

POLICE OFFICER
I understand your concern, but common protocol is to wait 24 hours before declaring an adult as missing.

Ron gets in his car.

RON
Listen, you were at my house today!
Something happened there!

The Police Officer cocks an eyebrow.

POLICE OFFICER
We were at your house? Why?

RON
I don't know! My neighbor told me
the police were there and my wife
was hurt. And now she's missing.
There must be a record of it.

The Officer types something on his computer. Intrigued, he
reads the screen.

Frustrated and impatient, Ron rubs his face.

POLICE OFFICER
Looks like we did answer a call to
your house today.

Ron perks up, pays attention.

POLICE OFFICER
Officers were dispatched to check
on a possible intruder in the
house. They did a thorough search,
but nothing suspicious was found.

RON
Does it say anything about her
being injured?

POLICE OFFICER
Says the homeowner was safe at the
time the officers left.

Ron ends the call, starts up the car.

INT. HOUSE - ROOT CELLAR - NIGHT

Total darkness until --

The door to the secret room opens.

Joan lies on the dirt floor. She squints against the light.

Derek, walks in, pushes down with his boot on her leg, then
grabs the protruding piece of wood, yanks it out.

Joan SCREAMS in pain.

He tosses the piece into a corner.

Blood drizzles out at a steady pace.

Joan pants hard, dismayed, she stares down at the flow of blood from her leg.

He grabs her by the arms, drags her into the --

SECRET ROOM

-- next to Ashley.

Tears well up in her eyes at the sight of her friend.

JOAN

Please. I need to see --

Derek interrupts with a sneer.

DEREK

Shut the fuck up. I'm not going to help you. You're gonna die here.

Confused, Joan stares at him.

JOAN

Why are you doing this?

DEREK

You forced yourself on us. We don't want you here.

Joan looks over at the mummies, then to Ashley. Her lower lip quivers. A tear glides down her cheek.

A tiny PING from somewhere.

Derek, freezes. Listens.

DEREK

Shut up.

Derek snags some rope off a small table, grabs Joan's hands.

She tries to pull free, kicks with her feet. In return, she gets his fist slammed into her face.

Derek's quick, ties her hands with the rope, then does the same with her feet.

He walks over to the mummified woman. She has a scarf around her neck. He pulls it off, stuffs it into Joan's mouth.

Grossed out, Joan gags.

Derek moves over to the brick panel, listens with his ear against it.

A smile appears. At once, Derek's personality changes, seems more relaxed. His face friendly. Wide eyed. Childlike.

He removes the security drop bar, then opens the panel.

He speaks in a high pitched six year old's voice.

DEREK/CHILD
Hello, little one.

He bends down to pet Ellie who rubs against his leg.

Stunned, Joans eyes grow wide.

Derek picks Ellie up, snuggles with her, smiles at Joan.

DEREK/CHILD
This is my kitty-cat. Her name is
Ellie.

He points to Ellie's name tag.

DEREK/CHILD
See, it says Ellie right here.

Derek seems happy, playful.

DEREK/CHILD
I found her. She's my friend.

He snuggles with her.

DEREK/CHILD
She likes me.

Joan notices the camera on Ellie's collar. Her wheels turn.

He puts Ellie down.

DEREK/CHILD
I have to close this now.

He puts the panel and drop bar back in place.

Joan works her mouth, tries to get the rag out while she fights back gag reflexes.

Derek notices Ashley. His personality changes again. He straightens up. Face hardens. His voice deeper, back to the first Derek.

While Joan works, she watches aghast as Derek takes a large black construction garbage bag out of a box, then stuffs Ashley into the bag.

When finished, he turns to Joan.

DEREK

When I come back, it's your turn.

He drags the large bag into the root cellar, up the wooden steps, into the tunnel and disappears.

Joan works as fast as she can on the rag. She gets it loose, spits it out onto the dirt floor with disgust. Saliva mixed with fear drools from the corners of her mouth.

She turns to Ellie who sits quietly, watches Joan.

JOAN

Come here, Ellie.

Ellie sits still, oblivious to anything wrong.

Joan wiggles forward into direct line of the camera.

JOAN

Come here, Ellie bellie. Meow meow.

Ellie stays put, watches Joan.

JOAN

C'mon Ellie, you have to move
otherwise the camera won't turn on.

Frustrated, Joan looks around for ideas, sees the rope around her ankles have a foot long end piece on the floor.

JOAN

Wanna play, Ellie?

Joan drags her feet slowly across the floor. Ellie's eyes follow the rope-end slithering in the dirt.

A tiny, barely visible red light turns on on the pet-cam.

Joan bends over, tries to be in front of the camera, but Ellie is busy playing with the rope end.

JOAN

Ronnie, I need help. I'm in big
danger.

Bored with the rope, Ellie meanders into the root cellar. Joan twists and writhes, follows the cat to keep her face in the frame of the pet-cam.

JOAN

I'm down in the basement. There's a locked door. I'm behind it. The brick wall is just a panel.

Ellie strolls back into the secret room.

JOAN

Ellie! No, come back here! Ellie!

INT. VIOLET'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

The kitchen is dark. Faint street light filters in.

Worried and unsure, Violet paces. She peers out the window at the house next door.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

With the umbrella over her head, Violet approaches on the sidewalk. Before taking the steps up to the front door, she scans the surroundings. All is quiet. No cars. No people.

She hurries up the steps, takes one last look around, then opens the door with her own key.

INT. HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT

Violet steps inside the dark room, folds the wet umbrella. Alert, she listens, but there's only silence. She shuts the door, turns on a small flashlight.

She pads down the hallway to the basement door. The umbrella drips water along the way.

BASEMENT

With tentative steps, Violet makes her way down the stairs.

The basement is dark. Ominous. Sounds of the inner workings of the house makes it extra eerie.

She stops by the brick wall, gives it a light knock.

VIOLET
(hushed)
Derek?

Knocks again.

VIOLET
Derek, we need to talk.

She waits. No response. She taps on the wall with her umbrella. This time, there's a weak knock from the inside in response. Violet lets out a surprised gasp.

VIOLET
Miss Joan?

SECRET ROOM

Joan has scooted up to the brick panel. She squints up at it.

JOAN
Yes, it's me. Get me out of here.

BASEMENT

Uncertain, Violet ponders what to do. She looks at her sturdy umbrella.

VIOLET
I will get you out. Hold on.

Violet pries the sharp tip into the crack by the panel, pulls back hard.

SECRET ROOM

Joan watches as the panel moves a tiny bit inwards. She lies down on her back, kicks with her bound feet up at the drop bar. It moves a tiny bit. She kicks it again and again until it pops out of its brackets.

The panel falls in on top of Joan.

Violet stumbles inside, grips the panel, pulls it aside.

Taken aback, she stares at Joan on the floor.

VIOLET
Oh my Lord...

They gaze at each other for a moment until Violet searches the space with her eyes. She lowers her voice.

VIOLET
Where is he?

Joan glowers at her.

JOAN
You knew he was here the whole
time, didn't you?

Violet avoids eye contact, gets down on her knees to untie Joan's hands.

JOAN
Did you know he's a killer too?

Violet works on the rope. Her hands tremble, making it hard.

Joan pulls her hands up in front of her face, forcing Violet to look up at her.

JOAN
You knew that too. Didn't you?

Joan pulls her in tighter, glares at her.

JOAN
He killed my best friend!

VIOLET
He... He's a nice boy.

She averts her eyes, shame colors her face.

VIOLET
He's just had a difficult time.

JOAN
A difficult time!?

Angry, Violet hisses.

VIOLET
He watched his own father kill his
mother and brothers before he put
that shotgun in his own mouth.

With a fiery glare, Joan spits out.

JOAN
You helped him cover up murder!

Violet hesitates, nods with regret.

VIOLET

I... I thought if I was nice to him. Helped him, he would change. I was wrong. So wrong.

A little steadier now, she gets back to work on the rope.

Shocked by Violet's words, Joan takes a moment to think.

Ellie sits nearby. A fixed gaze at the dark tunnel in the root cellar.

JOAN

How long have you helped him?

With her hands shaking, Violet continues work on the rope, avoids looking at Joan.

VIOLET

No one knew the Bolens had three children. Everyone thought there were only two. He stayed hidden in this house for over a year before I spotted him going through my trash one day.

Joan's astounded.

JOAN

He lived by himself for a year in this house?

With sadness, Violet peers up at Joan with a nod.

VIOLET

Poor thing was so scared when he saw me. Just like a stray cat.

She gets back to the rope.

VIOLET

When he got older, I took him to St. Francis. Some of the men took him under their wing. Helped him.

A flash of light from the tunnel.

Joan and Violet, whip their heads in the direction of the root cellar.

Spooked, Ellie runs past them back into the basement.

JOAN
(whispers)
He's back. Hurry.

Violet works fast, but her fingers are stiff and weak.

The sound of Derek's footsteps on the wooden stairs from the root cellar fills their space with dread.

Violet can't get the rope untied. She snuffles.

VIOLET
I can't do it. I can't...

Derek's footsteps grow closer until he appears in the doorway. His face filled with anger. He stomps in, strikes Violet in the face with his fist.

Her perfect dentures flies out, lands on the dirt floor.

Horrified, Joan stares as Violet falls backwards.

DEREK
What the fuck you think you're doing?

He pulls Violet's face up to his by her collar.

DEREK
You gonna turn me in? Is that it?

She shakes with fear. Stammers.

VIOLET
I. You. You have. Stop this. You need help. Professional help.

DEREK
Or what? You're gonna go to the cops and tell them you begged me to kill your husband?

Joan watches, confused. Derek notices.

DEREK
What? Thought she was just some innocent little old lady?

Tears roll down Violet's cheeks.

VIOLET
He was suffering. He didn't even know who I was anymore.

Joan spots Violet's umbrella on the floor. With her hands still tied, she reaches for it.

DEREK
(to Violet)
Horse shit! He asked me if it was
your idea.

WACK!

Joan hits Derek with the umbrella in the back of his knees.

Taken by surprise, he stumbles forward.

He spins around. Murderous eyes on Joan. Stalks towards her.

Joan jabs him in the groin with the sharp tip.

He grits his teeth, yanks the umbrella from her hands, raises it, then slams it down on Joan who curls up on the floor.

Fueled by rage, he hits her with it again. Again. And again.

Violet reaches into her pocket. With her arm stretched out, she sprays pepper spray into his face.

Derek howls, drops the umbrella, then rubs his eyes. With one hand, he grabs her thin neck, squeezes hard.

She tries to pry his hand off of her, but his strength is too much for her.

Derek blinks with blood red eyes, then squeezes her neck with both hands. Her eyes bulge in their sockets.

Joan watches in horror, decides to flee. She scoots through the opening into the basement.

Derek forces Violet down onto the dirt floor. She flails around, clutches at his hands around her neck.

After several tense seconds, her life escapes her. Her body goes limp.

Derek stands, looks down at yet another dead body. He turns to Joan, sees she's not there.

He hurries through the opening into the --

BASEMENT

Joan crawls fast as she can towards the stairs. She looks behind her, sees Derek rushing at her.

She climbs the steps on her elbows and knees.

He catches up, grabs her by the feet. Joan kicks him.

JOAN

Help! Help! Somebody!

Angry, Derek drags her kicking and screaming back to the secret room.

SECRET ROOM

Derek drops Joan right next to Violet.

JOAN

My husband will be here soon. He'll kill you.

A cruel chuckle from Derek as he taunts her.

DEREK

I have a lot of experienced with this. Does he?

Desperate, Joan looks around the grim space.

JOAN

Help! Help!

INT. CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

Worried sick, Ron drives through the rain.

INT. HOUSE - SECRET ROOM - NIGHT

Derek looks down at Joan and Violet, then his gaze drifts to the makeshift shrine. Again, his composure and demeanor changes. Calmer. Dignified. His voice, even and soothing.

DEREK/MOURNER

They won't hear you here.

He walks over to the shrine with measured steps. Gently touches the items on display.

DEREK/MOURNER

We raise statues and stones in honor of those we love. But as time moves on, their memories fade. Yet, those who've wronged us, their presence linger ever clear.

He turns to Joan.

DEREK/MOURNER
I find that tragic.

Wide eyed, Joan watches him. Forces herself to calm.

JOAN
What did you do with my friend?

He sits down across from her. Back straight. Legs Crossed.
Like a monk in meditation.

DEREK
She didn't belong here. Her
intentions were impure. This is a
place of reflection and solace.

Confused, Joan decides to tread lightly.

JOAN
Where did you... take her?

He smiles as if that was a dumb question.

DEREK/MOURNER
To the cemetery. That's where all
the disrespectful are laid to rest.

Joan blinks in disbelief.

JOAN
Cemetery?

He explains like it's the most normal thing.

DEREK/MOURNER
Yes. A friend there assists me. He
understands the importance of
protecting sanctified ground. He
lets me dispose of... those that
trespass here.

A flash of horror crosses Joan's face.

JOAN
Dispose of?

He brushes off the question with a wave of his hand.

JOAN
How many have you... disposed of?

He shrugs again.

DEREK/MOURNER

The numbers are not the essence.
What truly matters is ensuring this
house remains undisturbed.

Derek closes his eyes. Joan stares at him for a beat, then down at her leg. Desperate, she searches the space for ideas.

Her gaze stops at the opening to the basement, then back to him. She proceeds with caution.

JOAN

I need to see a doctor. Would you
let me, please?

Derek's demeanor, dignified, but chilling.

DEREK/MOURNER

There's no need for doctors, Joan.
Your departure from this sanctuary
shall not be to the outside world.

JOAN

Please. I understand how you must
feel after all you've been through,
I really do, but --

Derek's eyes pop open. There's a hardness in them now. His brows lower. Face tightens. Composure stiffer.

Terrified, Joan watches him change back to the original Derek. More raw. Visceral.

He pins Joan with a fiery gaze, then seemingly out of nowhere, he produces a vicious looking knife. He plays with it while he speaks.

DEREK

You have no fucking idea what I've
been through.

Joan's nervous eyes drift back and forth between his knife and his intense gaze.

JOAN

I didn't mean --

He stabs the knife into the dirt floor over and over.

Joan backs off, wary of his irritation.

DEREK

You probably think seeing your father kill your mom and your two brothers would be traumatizing.

He smiles. A murderer's smile. Cold. Dangerous.

DEREK

It was the happiest day of my life.

Joan's confused, fear filters in.

DEREK

The trauma was the years up until that day.

He toys with the knife. Like he might use it at any moment. Joan sits frozen, watches.

DEREK

What about you, Joan? What fucked you up so bad that you want to live in a house drenched in blood?

Joan sits stunned at the blunt question.

DEREK

Tell me about your demons, Joan.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Ron's car pulls into the driveway. The car turns off. Ron gets out, hurries up to the front door.

INT. HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT

Ron enters, shuts the door behind him. He flips on the lights, listens for sounds.

RON

Joan?

MEOW

Ellie strolls out from the kitchen to greet him. He bends down to pet her.

RON

Ellie, where's your mommy?

Ron notices the water drips on the floor. He follows the trail with his eyes, sees it goes down the dark hallway towards the basement.

Wary, he follows the wet spots.

He reaches the basement door. It's ajar.

Careful, he pushes it open, then listens.

RON
Joan? Are you down there?

SECRET ROOM

Derek crouches in front of Joan with the knife's tip poking the skin under her chin.

DEREK
You disgusts me. The horrors of my past, as fucked up as they are, never thought to trade someone's pain for a profit.

He pushes the knife harder into her skin. Blood trickles out.

Joan's breaths shallow, fast.

RON (O.C.)
Joansey!

Derek snaps his head to the opening to the basement. Joan opens her mouth to scream.

Derek plants his hand over her mouth.

JOAN
(muffled)
Ronnie!

DEREK
(hissing)
Shut up! Shut up!

Derek quickly reaches for that nasty scarf, forces it back into her mouth.

She screams underneath it.

BASEMENT

Ron focuses. Did he hear something?

RON
Joan?

He hurries down the steps.

RON
Joan!

SECRET ROOM

Derek picks up the brick panel, shoves it back in place, puts the drop bar in its brackets.

Now barely audible --

RON (O.C.)
Joan! Joansy!

Joan kicks and screams behind the gag.

Derek grabs her neck with both hands, squeezes hard.

DEREK
I told you, shut it.

Joan continues to make as much noise as she can. Derek squeezes tighter, puts his knee on her chest, presses down.

BASEMENT

Ron has his phone's flashlight on. He reaches the bottom of the steps, shines the light around.

RON
Joan?

He moves further into the basement.

The creepy sounds makes the house seem alive.

Ron reaches the mystery door. It's open. He approaches the brick wall.

RON
Joan?

He stares at the brick wall, reaches out, pushes on it. It's solid. He takes a step back, kicks it hard.

SECRET ROOM

THUD. THUD. THUD.

Derek pushes down harder on Joan.

Her eyes bulge. She squirms in panic.

BASEMENT

Ron stares at the wall. Desperate, he takes a step closer, puts his ear against the bricks.

RON

Joan!

SECRET ROOM

Joan lies limp under Derek. He eases his grip around her neck. She doesn't move.

He gets off of her, moves to the brick panel, puts his ear against it.

BASEMENT/SECRET ROOM

Ron and Derek, just a few inches apart...

Bewildered and lost, Ron takes a moment, tense breath, then heads back up the stairs.

SECRET ROOM

Derek listens.

Joan stirs. Starts to cough.

Derek descends on her, grabs her face, forces her to look him in the eye.

DEREK

Not a fuckin' word, or I'll end you
right here.

Joan glares at him, quiets down.

FIRST FLOOR HALLWAY

With a perplexed expression, Ron emerges from the basement.

MEOW

He sees Ellie sit in the doorway to the office. She rubs against the doorframe, walks inside. Ron follows.

OFFICE

He pets Ellie. Still wary, he scans the room for anything being off.

Ellie rubs against him. Over and over.

RON

What's the matter kitty?

Ellie gazes up at him, exposing the tiny camera.

Ron sees it, furrows his brow, then wakes the computer on his desk, clicks on the pet cam app.

The monitor fills with thumbnails for each video. He clicks on one that shows the basement.

PET-CAM POV

Moving down the steps in the basement. Blurry, monochrome colors adds to the creepiness.

Continuing on to the brick wall. Ellie's paws scratching it.

MEOW MEOW

Muffled sounds from the other side of the wall, then the panel is removed.

DEREK/CHILD (O.C.)

Hello, little one.

BACK TO SCENE

Joan's muffled screams behind the gag are heard.

Stunned, Ron's eyes grow wide.

DEREK/CHILD (O.C.)

This is my kitty-cat. Her name is Ellie.

Ron clicks on the next video.

PET-CAM POV

Blurry video of a piece of rope moving back and forth on a dirt floor. Ellie's paws swats at it.

A quick shot of Joan's face.

JOAN

Ronnie, help me. I'm in big danger.

The video moves around the root cellar.

JOAN

I'm down in the basement. Behind that locked door --

BACK TO SCENE

Alarmed, in a panic, Ron scrambles out into the --

KITCHEN

Where he grabs a knife from a wooden block, then rushes out into the --

FIRST FLOOR HALLWAY

-- where he sees Joan's toolbox. He picks up the crowbar and LED lantern, continues to the basement door. He pauses for a beat to focus, then quietly pushes the door open.

BASEMENT

On full alert, Ron descends the stairs, quick, but quiet.

He hurries to the brick wall. Using the lantern, he inspects the wall. At the edge, he notices scratch marks from Violet's umbrella.

He puts the lantern on the floor, then takes the crowbar, pries it into the already scratched part of the wall.

He works fast. Pulls hard. The panel gives a little, but the drop bar keeps it in place.

Ron uses the crowbar to rip the panel apart. Once there's a hole, he peers through it.

Through the hole, he sees Violet's legs on the floor.

RON

Joan! Joan! Are you in there?

He attacks the panel. Breaks it down piece by piece until he can fit through the hole.

SECRET ROOM

Ron stumbles in, hurries up to Violet. He feels her neck. She's dead.

On full alert, he looks around.

RON

Joan!

Ron gets up, sees the shrine. The mummies. He tightens his grip on the crowbar and knife, takes a cautious step towards the dark root cellar.

RON

Joan?

WHIRRR.

Derek staggers in from the root cellar wielding Joan's cordless circular saw.

He swings it at Ron who deflects with the crowbar. The two men fight back and forth. Landing blows. Taking blows.

Their weapons clash. The circular saw comes close to both of them numerous times. They narrowly avoid serious injury, but both receive cuts that bleed.

ROOT CELLAR

Joan's eyelids twitch. Her hands and feet still tied, nasty rag in her mouth. With a faint groan she opens her eyes.

The sounds of the fight from the secret room jolts her awake.

SECRET ROOM

Joan scoots into view from the root cellar.

Ron spots Joan out of the corner of his eye. Shocked at the sight of her, he freezes for a fraction of a second.

WHIRRR.

Derek lands a deep cut on Ron's leg. He counters with a hard blow with the crowbar on Derek's arm.

Derek grunts, drops the saw. They fight over the crowbar, end up on the floor.

Ron presses the crowbar against Derek's neck.

RON

Joan! Get out. Call the police.

Joan crawls into the secret room towards the circular saw.

Derek holds on tight to the crowbar, gathers strength, flips them both around so Derek's on top.

Joan manages to pull the trigger for the saw, cuts the ties around her ankles, but she can't pull the trigger and cut her wrist ties at the same time.

RON

Run Joan! Now.

Joan scrambles to her feet, limps out through the opening into the basement while working the rag out of her mouth.

BASEMENT

Joan hobbles through the basement to the stairs. She hurries best she can, but has to take the steps the one-legged way.

FIRST FLOOR HALLWAY

Joan crashes into the hallway, lands on her face. She groans in pain, looks up, sees her tool box.

SECRET ROOM

Derek pushes down hard with the crowbar on Ron's neck.

Ron sends his knee hard into Derek's crotch. Derek loses some of his strength on the crowbar. He growls at Ron.

DEREK

You fight like a pussy.

Ron flips them over again. He's now on top.

Derek sees Violet's umbrella nearby, lets go of the crowbar, reaches for it. He forces the umbrella's sharp tip into Ron's stomach.

Ron gasps, loses his strength, then rolls off Derek. His hand on the wound. Blood drizzles out between his fingers.

FIRST FLOOR HALLWAY

Joan digs around in the toolbox, finds a boxcutter when a growl is heard from the basement.

DEREK (O.S.)

Jonesy.

Frantic, Joan tries to cut her wrist ties, but her hands are tied too tight together. She sticks the cutter between her knees, moves her hands up and down against its blade.

STOMP. STOMP. STOMP.

The sound of Derek ascending the basement stairs.

DEREK (O.S.)

Joans.

The boxcutter falls away from her knee grip just as Derek appears in the doorway.

Desperate, Joan reaches for the boxcutter on the floor.

Derek kicks it away, then straddles her.

From Joan's angle, he looks big, menacing, insane.

Derek crouches down, almost sits on her stomach.

He reaches for the boxcutter. About to cut her neck when --

Joan, with both hands around a can of WD-40 sprays his face over and over with the chemicals.

Derek squeezes his eyes shut.

AHHHHH!

His hands fly up to cover his face.

Joan kicks him off of her. She struggles to her feet, hobbles off into the kitchen. A long blood trail behind on the floor.

Derek's face is a fiery red with eyes swollen. With murder in his eyes, he staggers after Joan into the --

KITCHEN

Joan slips on her own blood on the floor. Her face lands dangerously close to the trouble light. She notices it's still plugged in.

Enraged, Derek aims for Joan with the boxcutter raised. He lunges at her screaming.

AHHHH.

Joan grabs the drop light, jams it into Derek's face.

ZZZZZZZZZZ.

Derek spasms from the electricity.

Panic as his face turns red, steam billows out of his mouth and ears.

Joan stares in horror, but keeps the hot drop light to his face until --

The WD-40 catches fire.

Shocked, Joan drops the trouble light on the floor.

Derek's face, a gross mess of melting flesh. He sags to his knees. Collapses to the floor.

Joan scrambles to her feet, eyes fixed on Derek. She hobbles out of the room.

BASEMENT

Joan limps down the stairs. Shock and pain on her face.

It's dark down here.

The sound of something dragging on the floor is heard.

Joan stops, peers into the darkness.

A shape moves in the dark. It comes closer.

JOAN

Ron?

RON

Joan.

They hurry best they can to each other, then embrace.

Joan sobs.

RON

Where is he?

JOAN

I... I think I... killed him.

They support each other to the stairs.

JOAN

I just want... to get out... of
this house.

RON

I called 911. They should be here
soon.

They help each other up the steps.

Multiple sirens are heard in the distance.

FIRST FLOOR HALLWAY

They stagger out into the hallway, propping each other up on
their way to the front door.

MEOW

They turn around. To their horror, they see a grotesque
looking Derek with a melted face standing in the hallway.
Ellie in his grip. The boxcutter in his hand.

Joan takes a step towards him. Ron grabs her arm, holds her
back.

JOAN

Don't hurt my cat!

Derek pets her. Speaks in a distorted child's voice.

DEREK/CHILD

Ellie's my best friend. My best
friend ever.

Sirens outside. Coming closer.

Derek hugs Ellie, then lets her jump down. She runs off.

Joan and Ron, stare at Derek. He splutters. Unable to talk.

With a swift move, he slices his own neck with the
boxcutter. Blood gushes out.

He crashes forward, face first onto the floor.

Joan sobs. Ron hugs her, guides her to the front door.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Outside the window, lead gray clouds hang low over the tree tops. Rain drizzles down on the glass.

Two beds in the room. Ron lies in the one closest to the window. All his wounds covered with bandages. He watches the news on the TV.

In the other bed, Joan sits propped up with a laptop. She's bruised all over with bandages on all cuts. A drainage tube guides blood from her leg into bag on the side of the bed.

She types on the laptop. Some sort of writers software. The page on screen is full of text.

A RINGTONE on Facetime chimes.

Joan clicks on the app. Ruelle's face appears on the screen. Ruelle's eyes grow in shock at the sight of Joan.

RUELLE

Oh my God... how are you doing,
Joan?

Joan tries to smile, but it hurts.

JOAN

Every day is better than the one
before, so we're heading in the
right direction.

RUELLE

I watched about what happened on
the news. National news.

Joan groans.

RUELLE

Of course we all wished none of it
had happened, but you can't ask for
a better book promotion.

Baffled, Ron glances over.

RUELLE

Speaking of, how's the manuscript
coming?

With a slight nod, Joan manages a small stiff smile.

JOAN

I think I will be able to send it
to you in a few days.

Ruelle's surprised.

RUELLE

Wow. And, here I was afraid you were suffering writers block.

JOAN

This one practically wrote itself. The story has changed though. Instead of a supernatural horror it's now about the horror of human tragedy and the psychological scars it leaves behind.

RUELLE

I'm intrigued. I can't wait to read it. I'll call Davis right away and tell him you did it.

Ruelle glances at her watch.

RUELLE

Got to go. Don't forget to send it to me asap.

Ruelle disconnects the call.

Ron looks over at Joan.

RON

Book promotion! I know it's her job, but. Geez.

Joan mulls it. Her face floods with sadness, eyes well up.

JOAN

I miss Ashley.

Ron looks over at her.

RON

I'm so sorry, honey.

Joan blinks away tears, gazes out the window.

JOAN

I'm worried about Ellie too. I wish we could access her camera to see where she is, but it doesn't seem to transmit anymore.

CUT TO:

EXT. CEMETERY - CAT'S PET-CAM POV - NIGHT

Night vision. Monochrome black and white.

The view from down low.

Moving through a well kept graveyard. Grass mowed. Flowers by head stones and markers.

The cat moves through this quiet place.

CRUNCH!

The cat stops.

CRUNCH!

Turns toward the sound.

A few graves away, a shovel throws dirt onto a pile. Someone digs inside a new grave.

The cat moves closer. Sits down to watch.

Next to the pile of dirt is a large black garbage bag.

A MAN, STRAINS inside the hole.

Sounds of WOOD and METAL, followed by CREAKING.

The man breathes out with excitement, like someone who just found a treasure.

The cat moves closer, stops at the edge of the hole.

Inside the hole, the man opens a casket. Inside lies a very decomposed body.

The man pulls the garbage bag down, stuffs it into the casket, then closes the lid.

He climbs out of the grave, grabs the shovel, throws the dirt back inside.

Uninterested, the cat moves along the path, disappears into the night.

FADE OUT: